

THE
NEW-RIVER HEAD.

A
T A L E.

Attempted in the Manner of Mr. C. DENIS.

And Inscribed to

JOHN WILKES, Esq.

BY

ROBERT LLOYD.

Labitur & labetur in omne volubilis ævum.

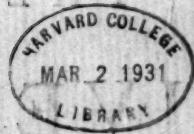
HOR.

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1931

JOHN WILKES

ROBERT LLOYD

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NEW-RIVER HEAD.

A T A L E.

DEAR WILKES, whose lively social Wit
Disdains the prudish Affectation
Of gloomy Folks, who love to sit
As Doctors *should* at Consultation,
Permit me, in familiar Strain,
To steal you from the idle hour
Of combating the NORTHERN THANE,
And all his puppet tools of Power.

Shame to the Wretch, if sense of shame
Can ever touch the miscreant's breast,
Who dead to virtue as to fame,
(A Monster whom the Gods detest)
Turns traitor to himself, to court
Or Minister or Monarch's smile ;
And dares, in insolence of sport,
Invade the CHARTER of our Isle.

But why should I, who only strive,
By telling of an easy tale,
To keep attention half alive
'Gainst BOLGOLAM and FLIMNAP rail ?
For whether ENGLAND be the name,
(Name which we're taught no more to prize)
Or BRITAIN, it is all the same,
The Lilliputian Statesmen rise
To malice of gigantic size.
Let them enjoy their warmth a while,
Truth shall regard them with a smile,

While

While you, like GULLIVER, in sport
 Piss out the fire, and save the Court,
 But to return — The tale is old ;
 Indecent, truly none of mine —
 What BEROALDUS gravely told ;
 I read it in that sound divine.
 And for indecency, you know
 She had her fashionable turn,
 As prim observers clearly shew
 In t'other Parson, Doctor STERNE.
 Yet POPE denies it all defence,
 And calls it, blest us ! Want of sense.
 But e'en the *decent* POPE can write
 * Of bottles, corks, and maiden sighs,
 Of charming beauties less in fight,
 Of the more secret precious hair,
 † “ And something else of little Size,
 You know where.”

* Rape of the Lock.

† Pope's Letters.

If such Authorities prevail,
 To varnish o'er this petty sin,
 I plead a pardon for my tale;
 And having hemm'd and cough'd—begin.

A Genius (one of those I mean,
 We read of in th' Arabian Nights;
 Not such as every day are seen
 At Bob's or Arthur's, whilom White's;
 For howsoe'er you change the name,
 The Clubs and Meetings are the same;
 Nor those prodigious learned folks,
 Your Haberdashers of stale Jokes,
 Who dress them up so neat and clean
 For News-paper or Magazine;
 But one that could play wond'rous tricks,
 Changing the very course of Nature,
 Not ASMODEUS on two sticks
 Or sage URGANDA could do greater.)

Once

Once on a time incog. came down
 From his equivocal dominions,
 And travell'd o'er a country town
 To try folks tempers and opinions:
 When to accomplish his intent
 (For had the cobbler known the king,
 Lord! it would quite have spoil'd the thing)
 In strange disguise he slyly went,
 And stump'd along the high-way track,
 With greasy knapsack at his back;
 And now the night was pitchy dark,
 Without one star's indulgent spark,
 Whether he wanted sleep or not,—
 Is of no consequence to tell;
 A bed and lodging must be got,
 For geniuses live always well.

At the best house in all the town,
 (It was th' attorney's you may swear)
 He knock'd as he'd have beat it down,
 Knock as you would, no entrance there.

But from the window cried the dame,
 Go, firrah go, from whence you came.
 Here, Nell, John, Thomas, see who knocks,
 Fellow, I'll put you in the stocks.
 Be gentle ma'm, the Genius cried ;
 Have mercy on the wand'ring poor,
 Who knows not where his head to hide,
 And asks a pittance at your door.
 A mug of beer, a crust of bread—
 Have pity on the houseless head ;
 Your husband keeps a lordly table,
 I ask but for the offal crumbs,
 And for a lodging—barn or stable
 Will shroud me till the morning comes.

'Twas all in vain ; she rang the bell,
 The servants trembl'd at the knell ;
 Down flew the maids to tell the men,
 To drive the vagrant back agen.

He

He trudg'd away in angry mind,
 And thought but cheaply of mankind,
 Till thro' a casement's dingy pane,
 A rush-light's melancholy ray,
 Bad him e'en try his luck again ;
 Perhaps beneath a house of clay
 A wand'ring passenger might find,
 A better friend to human kind,
 And far more hospitable fare,
 Tho' not so costly, nice, or rare,
 As smokes upon the silver plate
 Of the luxurious pamper'd great.

So to this cot of homely thatch,
 In the same plight the genius came :
 Down comes the dame, lifts up the latch ;
 What want ye fir ?

God save you, dame.

And

And so he told the piteous tale,
 Which you have heard him tell before,
 Your patience and my own would fail
 Were I to tell it o'er and o'er.
 Suffice it, that my goody's care
 Brought forth her best, tho' simple fare,
 And from the corner-cupboard's hoard,
 Her stranger guest the more to please,
 Bespread her hospitable board
 With what she had — 'twas bread and cheese.

'Tis honest tho' but homely cheer;
 Much good may't do ye, eat your fill,
 Would I cou'd treat you with strong beer,
 But for the action take the will.
 You see my cot is clean, tho' small,
 Pray heav'n encrease my slender stock!
 You're welcome, friend, you see my all;
 And for your bed, sir — there's a flock.

No

No matter what was after said,
He eat and drank and went to bed.

And now the cock his mattins sung,
(Howe'er such fingering's light esteem'd,
'Tis precious in the Muses' tongue
When sung rimes better than he scream'd)
The dame and pedlar both arose,
At early dawn of rising day,
She for her work of folding cloaths,
And He to travel on his way;
But much he thought himself to blame,
If, as in duty surely bound,
He did not thank the careful dame
For the reception he had found.
Hostess, quoth He, before I go,
I thank you for your hearty Fare;
Would it were in my pow'r to pay
My gratitude a better way;
But money now runs very low,
And I have not a doit to spare.

But if you'll take this piece of Stuff—
 —No quoth the dame, I'm poor as you,
 Your kindest wishes are enough,
 You're welcome, friend, farewell — Adieu.
 But first reply'd the wand'ring guest,
 For bed and board and homely dish,
 May all things turn out for the best,
 So take my blessing and my wish.
 May what you first begin to do,
 Create such profit and delight,
 That you may do it all day through,
 Nor finish till the depth of night.

Thank you, she said, and shut the door,
 Turn'd to her work, and thought no more.
 And now the napkin, which was spread
 To treat her guest with good brown bread,
 She folded up with nicest care;
 When lo! another napkin there!
 And every folding did beget
 Another and another yet.

She

She folds a shift — by strange encrease,
 The remnant swells into a piece,
 Her Caps, her Laces, all the same,
 Till such a quantity of Linen,
 From such a very small beginning,
 Flow'd in at once upon the Dame,
 Who wonder'd how the duce it came,
 That with the drap'ry she had got
 Within her little shabby cot,
 She might for all the town provide
 And break both York-street and Cheap-side.

It happen'd that th' attorney's wife,
 Who, to be sure, took much upon her,
 As being one in higher Life,
 Who did the Parish mighty honour,
 Sent for the Dame, who, poor and willing,
 Would take a job of charing work,
 And sweat and toil like any Turk,
 To earn a sixpence or a shilling.

She

She could not come, not she indeed !
 She thank'd her much, but had no need.

Good news will fly as well as bad,
 So out this wond'rous story came,
 About the Pedlar and the Dame,
 Which made th' Attorney's wife so mad,
 That she resolv'd at any rate,
 Spite of her pride and Lady airs,
 To get the Pedlar tête à tête,
 And make up all the past affairs,
 And tho' she wish'd him at the devil,
 When he came there the night before,
 Determin'd to be monstrous civil,
 And drop her curtsie at the door.

Now all was racket, noise and pother,
 Nell running one way, John another,
 And Tom was on the coach-horse sent,
 To learn which way the Pedlar went.

Thomas

Thomas return'd ; — the Pedlar brought.

— What could my dainty Madam say,

For not behaving as she ought,

And driving honest folks away ?

Upon my word, it shocks me much,

— But there's such thieving here of late —

Not that I dream'd that you were such,

When you came knocking at my gate.

I must confess myself to blame,

And I'm afraid you lately met

Sad treatment with that homely dame,

Who lives on what her hands can get.

Walk in with me at least to-night,

And let us set all matters right.

I know my duty, and indeed

Would help a friend in time of need.

Take such refreshment as you find,

I'm sure I mean it for the best,

And give it with a willing mind

To such a grave and sober guest.

So in they came, and for his picking,
 Behold the table covers spread,
 Instead of Goody's cheese and bread,
 With tarts, and fish, and flesh, and chicken,
 And to appear in greater state,
 The knives and forks with silver handles,
 The candlesticks of bright (French) plate
 To hold her best mould (tallow) candles,
 Were all brought forth to be display'd,
 In female housewifry parade.
 And more the Pedlar to regale,
 And make the wond'rous man her friend,
 Decanters foam'd of mantling ale,
 And port and claret without end;
 They hobb'd and nobb'd, and smil'd and laugh'd,
 Touch'd glasses, nam'd their toasts, and quaff'd;
 Talk'd over every friend and foe,
 Till eating, drinking, talking past,
 The kind house-clock struck twelve at last.
 When wishing Madam *bon repos*,

The Pedlar pleaded weary head,
Made his low bow, and went to bed.

Wishing him then at perfect ease,
A good soft bed, a good sound sleep,
Now, gentle reader, if you please,
We'll at the Lady take a peep.
She could not rest, but turn'd and tofs'd,
While Fancy whisper'd in her brain,
That what her indiscretion lost,
Her art and cunning might regain.
Such Linnen to so poor a dame !
For such coarse fare ! perplex'd her head ;
Why might not she expect the same,
So courteous, civil, and well-bred ?

And now she reckon'd up her store
Of Cambricks, Hollands, Muslins, Lawns,
Free gifts, and Purchases, and Pawns,
Resolv'd to multiply them more,

Till

Till she had got a Stock of Linnen,
Fit for a Dowager to sin in, and w. and w. and w.

The morning came, when up she got,
Most ceremoniously inclin'd
To wind up her sagacious plot,
With all that civil stuff we find
'Mongst those who talk a wond'rous deal
Of what they neither mean nor feel.

How shall I, Ma'm, reply'd the Guest,
Make you a suitable return,
For your attention and concern,
And such civilities express'd
To one, who must be still in debt
For all the kindness he has met?
For this your entertainment's sake,
If ought of good my wish can do,
May what you first shall undertake,
Last without ceasing all day through.

Madam,

Madam, who kindly understood
 His wish effectually good,
 Strait dropp'd a curtsie wond'rous low,
 For much she wanted him to go,
 That she might look up all her store,
 And turn it into thousands more.
 Now all the maids were sent to look
 In every cranny, hole and nook,
 For every rag which they could find
 Of any size, or any kind.
 Draw'rs, Boxes, Closets, Chests and Cases
 Were all unlock'd at once to get
 Her Point, her Gawz, her Prussia-net,
 With fifty names of fifty kinds,
 Which suit variety of minds.

How shall I now my tale pursue,
 So passing strange, so passing true?

When

When every bit from every hoard,
 Was brought and laid upon the board,
 Left some more urgent obligation
 Might interrupt her pleasing toil,
 And marring half her application,
 The promis'd hopes of profit spoil,
 Before she folds a single rag,
 Or takes a cap from board or bag,
 That nothing might her work prevent,
 (For she was now resolv'd to labour,
 With earnest hope and full intent
 To get the better of her neighbour)
 Into the garden she would go
 To do that necessary thing,
 Which must by all be done, you know,
 By rich and poor, and high and low,
 By Male and Female, Queen and King.
 She little dream'd a common action,
 Practis'd as duly as her pray'rs,
 Sould prove so tedious a transaction,
 Or cost her such a sea of cares.

In short the streams so plenteous flow'd,
 That in the dry and dusty weather,
 She might have water'd all the road
 For ten or twenty miles together.
 What could she do? as it began,
 Th' involuntary torrent ran.
 Instead of folding Cap or Mob,
 So dreadful was this distillation,
 That from a simple watering job,
 She fear'd a general Inundation.
 While for her Indiscretion's crime,
 And coveting too great a store,
 She made a river at a time,
 Which sure was never done before.